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CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION

By
EARL IRVIN WEST



A Historical Study

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By
Earl Irvin West

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PREFACE

Many problems arise out of the growth of the kingdom of Christ. In the first days of the church, the congregation at Jerusalem was called upon to solve the feeding of the thousands who were baptized. They did so in the framework of the divine pattern. After nineteen centuries, the problem of expansion is still with us. From the few men who over one hundred years ago called for the restoration of primitive Christianity, the church now has grown to upward of 20,000 congregations in many lands. All of this has been done without giant schemes, or brotherhood wide projects, and in spite of those who were not content to abide by the simple organization of the New Testament. The problem arises again in our time. Great plans are set forth that involve far more than the local church. The means and methods of New Testament expansion are again under fire.

Earl West is prepared to write on "Congregational Cooperation" as are few men of our generation. Known for years for his knowledge of the Bible and his soundness in the faith, he has lived and worked in Indiana where departures in organization by the Digressive church have had full effect. Attending Butler University, he has seen the tragedy of such a course. Brother West is also the author of two great volumes on the history of the restoration. In these works, called **THE SEARCH FOR THE ANCIENT ORDER**, he has not only traced but exposed the folly of leaving the pattern. He is now a member of the faculty of Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee. He has repeatedly appeared on the "lectureships" of every college among our people. By no flight of the imagination can he be called anything but one of the truest preachers and finest thinkers in the church today. The message he has for the saints of God on the following pages needs to be studied carefully by all. It is my wish that this tract will find its way into many homes and that the truth it contains may find its way into many hearts.

Yours for truth,
JAMES P. MILLER
Tampa, Florida

Congregational Cooperation

A Historical Study

The attempt to return to the primitive order of things in religion has not been made without facing some serious problems. At times these have appeared to be insurmountable obstacles. The problem faced over the past one hundred and fifty years by our brethren have caused alienation, division, bitterness, and discouragement. Some of these questions that were raised in the earlier days have been answered and are now seldom discussed. Principles involved in other questions have been kept alive and lie basically beneath some of the misunderstandings of today.

The question of congregational cooperation is not only one of the earliest to arise in the restoration movement, but one of the liveliest from the days of Alexander Campbell to the present. How may congregations cooperate to do the work of the Lord? This question lay beneath the whole problem of the missionary society. For forty years this subject was discussed with keen acrimony, the *Gospel Advocate* leading the way in opposing this human organization. But the question of how congregations can cooperate to do the work of the Lord is still as much alive today as ever.

It is the intention of this article and a series to follow to set forth in condensed form the highlights of the congregational cooperation controversy. The author hopes that he can be entirely objective and honest in this study. His only purpose is to furnish a historical background for the present-day problems with a desire that this may become a vantage ground from which the whole problem may be surveyed. It is hoped that no one will imagine that the author writes from any feeling of malice or vindictiveness. He is angry with no one, knows of no personal enemies, so writes from no feeling of ill will. His earnest desire is that these articles may challenge us to think, for normally problems can be better answered when they are faced frankly than when they are ignored, despite the sometimes unpleasant consequences.

Three Answers To One Question

How many congregations of the Lord cooperate in the Lord's work? Historically this questions has been answered in three ways.

One answer given by brethren in the early days of the restoration movement was that congregations could cooperate only through the organization of additional bodies, constituted of members or delegates of the local congregations. District and state cooperation meetings were held. Delegates or messengers from each local church attended. Presidents and secretaries of these organizations were elected. Evangelists were appointed and sent out by the Cooperation organization. There is a close resemblance in this to the Baptist Associations, out of which many of the earlier members of the church had come. Theoretically at least, congregations were left entirely free; the cooperation organization applied no dictatorship policies. These organizations furnished the means through which the local congregations, by their messengers and representatives, could cooperate. The logical outcome of this type of organized cooperation was the American Christian Missionary Society formed in Cincinnati in October, 1849, of which Alexander Campbell was the first president.

A second type of cooperation was generally found in Texas after the Civil War. Largely through the influence of Carroll Kendrick, "State Meetings" were begun. They were held usually at a place designated a year in advance. A local congregation was appointed, through which the other churches could do their mission work. For several years the church at Sherman assumed the responsibility of sponsoring a missionary in the field. Other congregations aided this church in the field. There was perhaps as little human machinery connected with this type of cooperation as could be found for that day. But Texas became filled with people from the East. Soon there was a demand for more machinery that resulted finally in the establishment of the Texas State Missionary Society in 1886. Before this the elders of a local congregation acted "as a receiving, managing and disbursing evangelizing committee," to use a descriptive phrase of Carroll Kendrick's. In short, a way was provided for the church universal to act—through the elders of a local congregation.

The third type of congregational cooperation is more difficult to describe, and the concept behind it was much

slower in developing. The chief promoter was David Lipscomb. It was the belief that the congregations of the Lord, in their individual and local and scriptural way was true cooperative work. "Every individual in any part of the world," wrote Lipscomb, "working in true cooperation in these bodies is cooperating with every other." Lipscomb's illustrations of his convictions were often drawn from farm life, and this was no exception. Two neighbor farmers work independently. One farmer faces an emergency which he cannot handle alone. He calls in his neighbor for aid. "Each, pursuing his own course, cooperate." When the emergency is over, no cumbersome machinery is left. Lipscomb was convinced that much of the controversy over cooperation was due to a lack of understanding of what constituted cooperation. Two congregations, although a thousand miles apart, each pursuing its own independent course in the work of the Lord, are necessarily cooperating. Their work is cooperative.

As these articles continue, more will be said about these concepts. It is enough here to lay before the reader these three major viewpoints. The development of them will largely concern us in these studies.

II

Early Church Cooperation

The question of how congregations of the Lord may cooperate came up very early in the restoration movement. It played a prominent role in delaying until 1835 a union between the forces of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. The idea of a return to the primitive order of things did not originate with Campbell, for Stone had the idea earlier. In dissolving the Springfield Presbytery in 1804, Stone set his course toward a complete return to apostolic Christianity. Alexander Campbell's first sermon was not preached until 1810; the Brush Run congregation did not become a reality until the following year. Even earlier than Stone or Campbell, James O'Kelly and Elias Smith were contemplating a return to the ancient order—the former in Virginia and the latter in New Hampshire. But as the American frontier pushed to the west, and pioneer settlements sprang up in the basin of the Ohio River, both Stone and

Campbell moved with it, each denouncing human creeds and strongly advocating unity on the basis of the revealed will of God.

The "Newlight congregations," as Stone's group was known, quickly learned of the existence of Campbell and the "Reformers," as they were called. In many villages congregations existed side by side—the "Newlight" in one part of town, and the "Reformers" in another. A comparison of their respective beliefs showed that they were surprisingly close together. Naturally many brethren in both groups wanted to unite their forces, but on a few points, some understanding had to be worked out. One of these major points was, "How can congregations of the Lord cooperate?"

The "Reformers" were largely out of the Baptist background. At the time Stone first became acquainted with Campbell, the "Reformers" had organized the Mahoning Baptist Association on the Western Reserve. Baptist Associations were theoretically loosely organized groups, made up of messengers of the churches. Congregations were free to send messengers, or free to refuse to send them. The associations were not supposed to have any authority over the churches, but simply an expedient through which the churches could work. Those who believe that Alexander Campbell never sympathized with the American Christian Missionary Society may do well to remember that Campbell never lost his admiration for the theory involved in the Baptist Association in 1830, and felt then, and always afterward, that the action dissolving the association was inconsiderate.

When, therefore, a union between the "Newlights" and the "Reformers" was first proposed, Stone looked at the Mahoning Association and wondered. Twenty years earlier he had renounced all human organizations by dissolving the Springfield Presbytery. Should the union be consummated, would the "Newlights" be called upon to work through these organizations? Late in the year, 1826, Barton Stone began publication of the *Christian Messenger*. The first issue of the paper is significant because it carries a discussion over this question between Stone and Walter Scott. Stone explained to Scott that his brethren were opposed to "Annual Meetings" and "Con-

ferences," but Scott defended them. Scott insisted their opposition was due to a lack of information. He made it clear that he would not quibble over "names," so whether they were called "Conferences," "Associations" or "Annual Meetings" was no concern to him. He explained that these organizations did not meet for the purpose of legislating or making laws for the church. "I do most sincerely," wrote Scott, "and I hope ever shall, contend for the absolute independency of the church, as to the complete transaction of its own business; and for its want of responsibility to any human tribunal whatever." The purpose of these annual affairs, Scott pointed out, was simply "to worship together, and strengthen the bonds of union, to receive and obtain information from the different churches, either from their letters or from messengers, and attend to their suggestions, and as far as in our power comply with their requests; attend to ordination, if thought proper, when required by the brethren; to arrange our appointments so as to supply the destitute churches with preaching; and imitate the primitive church by making such requests only as may be proper to set things in order."

Scott made these human organizations look attractive enough. "I would therefore oppose any convocation, the object of which is to take from the churches any of their sovereign rights and prerogatives, or to legislate in any manner whatever for them." Stone agreed that all this sounded innocent enough, but he was still convicted that the "Reformers" were too much like the Baptists. The "advices" given by these associations often spelled doom for a congregation when it refused to accept them. The fact that three years later Walter Scott led in the move to dissolve the Mahoning Association shows the feeling of unrest that prevailed. Five years later the union of the "Newlights" and "Reformers" was completed at Lexington, Kentucky, but this in no wise settled the issue of congregational cooperation.

Cooperation Meetings

The dissolving of the Mahoning Association in 1830 did not put an end to the formation of organizations through which the churches could work to cooperate. "Cooperation Meetings," fully organized with presidents

and corresponding secretaries, sprang up like magic all over the brotherhood. The belief continued to prevail that these organizations were the answer to the question: "How can churches cooperate in the Lord's work?" Each time a new District Cooperation Meeting was organized there was a re-affirmation of the purity of its motives. When, for example, the first Cooperation was organized in South Alabama in 1848, Alexander Graham wrote: ". . . that this meeting was not a court or church of appeals from individual congregations, nor had any power to coerce the same into obedience to its mandates;—that it has no power to pass laws to bind the individual congregations, or to form articles of faith for their observance;—that each congregation is sovereign as to all matters therein, when governing itself by the Bible.

"That all we can do here is to devise the best ways and means for propagating the gospel, the congregation may carry those plans out or dissent from them"

Functioning

How did these Cooperation Meetings function? It might be well to notice briefly two of them. A Cooperation Meeting of the Western District of Virginia and the neighboring churches of Ohio met at Wheeling on Saturday, March 19, 1836. Alexander Campbell was president, and Robert Richardson and Joel Martin were secretaries. A roll of the messengers was called and each answered. Reports were then made of the activities of various churches. Among the things discussed were the following: That the district embraced by the Cooperation was too large and should be divided into several. It was also decided to restrict the Cooperation to that number of churches that may be able to sustain evangelists. The result was that this District Cooperation Meeting was divided into five smaller districts, each of which had its own meeting once a year, and then sent messengers to a larger meeting at Wellsburg.

Another typical Cooperation Meeting was held in Hancock County, Indiana, on Lord's Day, April 17, 1836. Brethren from six congregations met at the Sugar Creek congregation. Chaney Butler was president and Eddy Cole was secretary of this particular Cooperation. The

Cooperation appointed Peter H. Roberts and Gabriel C. McDuffie as evangelists. The six congregations represented by the Cooperation agreed to sustain them.

These District Cooperation Meetings were but miniature missionary societies, and quite naturally, the forerunners of the American Christian Missionary Society. Brethren, schooled in the type of thinking necessary to make them belong to these Cooperations, were necessarily ardent enthusiasts of a national organization made up of messengers of the churches, which would do work on a much broader scale. It was to be expected that when the controversy over the American Christian Missionary Society arose, there also would be involved these District and State Cooperation Meetings. If the principle involved in a national organization were wrong, the principle supporting the state or district organizations had to be wrong.

Opposition

Despite Alexander Campbell's and the Millennial Harbinger's warm support of these Cooperation Meetings, some more thoughtful brethren feared the church was headed in the wrong direction. T. M. Henley, one of the heroes of the faith in Virginia wrote to Campbell in 1836: ". . . It does appear to me there is a falling off in some measure from what we first set out with—'a restoration of the ancient gospel and order of things, and a pure apostolic speech.' If I am mistaken in this, it will give me pleasure to find it to be so. But it seems to me like a departing from the simplicity of the Christian Institution to have cooperation meetings with presidents and secretaries calling for the messengers of the churches, and laying off districts. This was nearly the principle upon which the Baptists began in Old Virginia (except their creed) and it has now become the scourge and curse to the peace of society. I am for cooperation too; but cooperation, if I understand the term, implies weakness. When any one church wishes to send out an evangelist and is unable to sustain him in the faith, she may invite her sister churches to cooperate with her. If the invitation is accepted, when the members visit those inviting them on a set day, they ought to act as in the house of another family. The elders of this congregation preside and state

the object for which they were invited and their inability to perform the work themselves, and ask their assistance and the sum of money wanting. This being agreed on, then all concerned can unite in selecting their evangelist, either leaving the arrangement to the evangelist or pointing out the most suitable ground to be occupied by him—for one year or the time agreed on. The congregation proposing to cooperate, appoints one of her members or elders to receive all monies and pay over Quarterly to their evangelist what they may judge necessary to sustain him in the field. This brother's account to be presented to the churches cooperating annually. Such is our course, and I think there is not the same danger of running into the popish principles and practices of the sects as when we have presidents and secretaries—with their anathemas following”

In the early days Tennessee fell right in line with other congregations and had her District Cooperation Meetings. William Lipscomb was once secretary of the Christian Evangelizing Association in Tennessee, and David Lipscomb was corresponding secretary for the Mountain District Cooperation. But when Tolbert Fanning began to have doubts that these organizations were pleasing to the Lord, he found himself at first standing almost alone in his particular section of the country. With such men as Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Campbell, D. S. Burnet, John T. Johnson, Robert Richardson, and Walter Scott against him, Fanning decided to push ahead cautiously. He attended the first meeting of the Society in 1849 as an observer purely with the hope of securing some information that would prove him wrong so he could go along with his brethren. But he came away disappointed. In 1848 he had turned his paper, *The Christian Review*, over to J. B. Ferguson to edit. Editorially, Ferguson led the *Review* right along the line of popular brotherhood sentiment in favor of the societies. No free discussion of the issue could be forthcoming in Tennessee at this time. When the paper collapsed in 1853 due to Ferguson's visionary speculations, it proved to be providential. It freed Fanning to establish the *Gospel Advocate* in 1855 and to get a free investigation of the matter before the brethren.

Fanning's attitude followed the principle of charity so far as it ran parallel to the scriptures. "It is well understood," he wrote in one of the early issues of the *Advocate*, "that for many years I have doubted the practical results of the cooperation in Tennessee, and indeed in other states, but I have yielded to my brethren of age and experience, and I should be willing to yield longer, could I conclude it would be to the honor of God." "In establishing the 'Gospel Advocate'," he continued, "determined by the help of the Lord to give the subject of cooperation a thorough examination. I do not pretend to say how it has been brought about, but I have for years believed that a change must take place in our views of cooperation, before we can labor to each other's advantage, or to the honor of God."

It was fortunate for the church in Tennessee that Fanning—and Lipscomb after him—pursued the cautious course they did. Had they radically started drawing lines of fellowship against all who sympathized with Cooperation Meetings, they not only would have appeared to be dictators but would have driven a large number of their brethren from them. As it was, steady, methodical teaching brought on the slow but sure death of human organizations in Tennessee to do the work of the Lord.

After the Civil War, Cooperation Meetings continued but with steadily changing complexion. A "Consultation Meeting" was held in Murfreesboro in 1866 to help the churches recuperate from the effects of the war. But there was no human machinery about it. The invitation was given by the elders of the church, and the meeting was conducted and overseen by them. Even the obnoxious title, "Cooperation Meeting" was dropped, and "Consultation Meeting" was substituted. So dead were human organizations in Tennessee by 1877 that when Samuel Kelley, the new preacher for the Vine Street Church in Nashville, called a state-wide meeting in the city, it met with cool reception.

The careful, prayerful, slow and methodical method of teaching on the subject paid off. When Moses E. Lard, a staunch supporter of Missionary Societies, came to Murfreesboro around 1870 for a meeting, he remarked that he would rather cast his lot with the churches in

Tennessee than any state in the union, and that a purer form of apostolic Christianity was practiced here than any place in his acquaintance.

III

The establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in 1849 was an attempt by the "church universal" to use its maximum strength for the conversion of the world to Christ. How may local churches cooperate to do the work of the Lord? The answer of the national Missionary Society was, the churches can best cooperate when a human organization is formed, constituted of delegates of these congregations, and dedicated to the task of preaching the gospel. But the most important aspect of the American Christian Missionary Society does not come with a study of the events connected with its founding, but rather with the basic thinking, the actual concepts, that were working for a decade prior to its establishment. So important is this analysis that we approach it with a prayer that God will guide our investigations.

Church Universal

No person is capable of understanding the defense for the missionary society who does not recall first the two concepts of the church in the New Testament—the "church universal" and the "local church" or congregation. The "church particular," Campbell defined as a "single community in a single place," and the "church universal" as the "congregated multitude of all these communities." A fuller definition of a local congregation, Campbell defines as follows: "Church of Christ is a single society of believing men and women, statedly meeting in one place, to worship God through one Mediator." The church universal was made up of all such congregations the world over.

As Campbell looked at the local church, he felt its officers were simply bishops and deacons. The officers of the church universal, he contended, were apostles, prophets and evangelists, an idea he no doubt borrowed from John Glas of Scotland. Not too much significance is to be attached to this "extraordinary" class of officers for they had little to do with his concept on the point of

the missionary society. Campbell's belief that the "evangelist" was an officer, not in a local church, but in the church universal, gave birth to the idea of "evangelistic oversight" of congregations, later to gain some prominence in certain local areas. What Campbell overlooked, however, was the fact that the term, evangelist, does not describe an office, but a work. John was called, "the Baptist," not because he held such an office, but the term was descriptive of his work. A "preacher" is so-called because he "preaches," but a "preacher," merely because he is a preacher, is not an officer—in either the church local or the church universal. To say that the apostles and prophets were officers of the church universal is again open to question. These officers were heaven-appointed, not church-appointed. Peter owed his apostleship to the appointment of no congregation or combination of congregations. He was appointed by Christ. Furthermore, these officers were temporary, not permanent.

The important point to be remembered, we believe, is that the only officer known to the church universal is Christ. He is the Head of the church, the only sovereign ruler known by the church universal. It is highly significant then, that whenever the church universal begins to act, somebody, some organization, or some man, assumes the sovereign prerogatives that belong to Christ. Rome claims to be the "Catholic" Church—that is, the church universal. Over this church has been set the Pope, who is falsely believed to be Christ's viceregent on earth. The Pope has assumed the power, dignity, and authority that belongs to Christ alone. Protestant churches have rejected the Pope, but they have substituted conferences and councils. These legislate for the church, and they assume the power, dignity and authority that belongs to Christ.

The Problem Today

Out of consideration of these facts, the question may be asked: Has God ever intended that the church universal as such, should act? The local congregations, each in his own area, acting independently of every other and, working under the oversight of elders, are to work to save souls. One of the problems that faces us, even at this late date, is to decide whether it was ever God's intention that all of the local congregations should bind

themselves together in any form by any plan, to do the work of the Lord. If it be God's intention, then what is the form or plan, or is there one; in short does it make any difference?

Let no one be deceived, for this is the problem the brotherhood faces today. The answer of Alexander Campbell was that God did intend for the church universal as such to act. He further admitted that God prescribed no plan, and this leaves man free, by his wisdom, to devise whatever plan he may deem best. So, Campbell established a missionary society. The answer being given today is that God did intend for the church universal to act through the elders of a local congregation. So, a local

congregation obligates itself to spend a half-million dollars in one year for a national radio broadcast, or a benevolent institution. Is anyone so naive to suppose that this is the work of a local church? A local congregation has obligated itself to become the agency through which the church universal can act. It is not here the intention to argue the point, but only to challenge our thinking. This is a major problem the brotherhood faces, and no one can underestimate the importance of answering it correctly. Does God intend for the church universal to act in any kind of combination? Yes or no?

Still other challenging questions may be raised. If God did intend for the church universal to act in some combination, what is that combination? Campbell's reply was that no combination is set forth in the New Testament; therefore man is free to form any kind of combination that his own wisdom may dictate so long as it does not threaten the independency of the local churches. Those believing that the church universal as such should act would do well to ponder thoughtfully Campbell's reasoning. If there is a plan, a provision for some combination of the local churches in the New Testament, where and what is it? If there is none, and if God yet intended for the church universal to have one, is not Campbell right in saying that man is left free to provide his own? If this be true, what objection then could there be to the missionary society stripped of its objectionable features, for doing this work?

Furthermore, if it be God's intention that the church

universal, as such, should act, and that through the elders of a local church, other questions arise. What criteria should be used in selecting out of all the congregations which local church will be the agency for the church universal? Do the elders of one local church scripturally have more power and authority than the elders of other local churches? Moreover, if it be God's intention that all congregations should act through the eldership of one, would not the refusal or neglect of the many congregations be sinful and treasonable?

It is hoped the reader will not imagine the author has an "Axe to grind," or that he intends to fight any good work. The author in no sense of the term believes he has all the answers. He is trying to recognize what the problems are and is seeking for the answers in the light of New Testament teaching. He merely poses these problems because he believes they are tremendously important, and because he believes many in the brotherhood are not conscious of them. If they merely challenge us to think, they will fulfill their intention.

Campbell's Position

But to return to Campbell, the great reformer, in line with his belief that God intended the church universal to act, wrote, ". . . the writers of the New Testament never designed to lay down in detail a complete platform of church government." At a time when District Cooperations were prevalent, Campbell said, ". . . our present cooperative system is comparatively inefficient, and indaequate to the emergencies of the times and the cause we plead." He bemoaned the fact that "there are gathered a thousand and more communities spread over this great continent, without any systematic form of cooperation." He feared a retrograde movement unless something could be done to establish an organization such as he planned—the American Christian Missionary Society.

Campbell believed that the public interests of the church universal require public agents—"messengers"—as do the private interests of the church . . . "In all things," he said, "pertaining to public interest, not of Christian faith, piety, or morality, the church of Jesus Christ in its aggregate character, is left free and

unshackled by any apostolic authority. This is the great point which I assert as of capital importance in any great conventional movement or cooperation in advancing the public interests of a common Christianity and a common salvation." Campbell saw no need of a "thus saith the Lord" as it respected the society. "For my own part," he wrote, "I see no necessity for any positive divine statutes in such matters. Whatever, then, secures the independence and individual responsibility of every particular Christian community, and at the same time leaves open to covenant agreement all matters of cooperation in promoting the common cause of Christianity in the world fully satisfies my mind as to duty and obligation." Campbell asserted his belief that the Baptist Association "divested of certain objectionable appendages," was the "most acceptable form of cooperation in Christendom."

Shortly before the Convention of 1849 that established the Missionary Society, Campbell recalled for his brethren's benefit that he had been opposed to the dissolution of the Mahoning Association, and that he believed "in a changing society," it was essential for elders and messengers of the churches to come together in regular stipulated meetings.

It would be needless to continue multiplying quotations from Campbell. These are given that all may understand his point of view. Many, who do not know what Campbell believed, are satisfied that he was wrong.

IV

Gospel Advocate

The Gospel Advocate resumed publication in January, 1866, after five years of silence occasioned by the Civil War. David Lipscomb now stepped to the front. He was a humble, unassuming man of boundless faith in God. When Thomas Munnell, corresponding secretary of the Kentucky Christian Missionary Society, asked Lipscomb how he expected to convert the world by "unorganized cooperation" of churches, Lipscomb's reply was, "... for our faith is of that character, that we believe if God had proposed to convert the world through the agency of the church, although I may fail to see how He will do it, nevertheless, He is able to remove the difficulties and my

duty is in simple, trusting faith to do what He has commanded me and leave the result with Him" But few men in Israel have that kind of faith.

Believing that the church was God's only divine agency for converting the world, David Lipscomb's editorial policy in the *Gospel Advocate* tended to encourage the churches to greater service while building a distrust for human organizations to do the work of the church. For the first few years after the war, the paper fought furiously against what appeared to be insurmountable odds. Its circulation was largely in the South, but it gained a surprising popularity even in the North. The *Gospel Advocate* rode the crest of immigration to Texas. It was not unusual for a rider to cross the plains all day, stop at night at some friendly cabin, and find the occupants reading an issue of the *Advocate*. The paper caused men to think. Although there were few men that had advanced as far as Lipscomb in their studies of the question, still his opposition made them cock an eyebrow. Maybe Lipscomb had something! At least, it was worth considering.

John T. Poe had been reared in the Methodist Church. At the mourner's bench when he had "gotten religion," he found some relief. He was a Confederate soldier during the war. Sitting around the camp fire one night in 1864, Poe read in the New Testament about baptism, and concluded he had not been baptized. After the war, he returned to Huntsville, Texas, and under the preaching of J. W. D. Creath, presented himself for membership in the Baptist Church. Poe let Creath know that he objected to many of the teachings of the Baptists but did want to be baptized to obey God. Very shortly, he became one of the leading correspondents for the "Texas Baptist Herald." When T. M. Sweeny came to Huntsville in May, 1867, and preached the simple, primitive gospel, Poe was so impressed that he and his wife "bade adieu to sectarian folly."

The *Gospel Advocate* was soon placed in Poe's hands. He read Lipscomb's objections to Cooperation Meetings. The light only slowly dawned, and then only after considerable struggles with himself. Late in 1869, he wrote to Lipscomb saying that many of the brethren in Texas

thought him to be inconsistent because he was always pulling down Cooperative Meetings without offering any better plan. At a general meeting in 1869, Poe found Texas brethren worried over these two questions: (1) What were Lipscomb's objections to the cooperation of churches sending out the gospel? (2) How can the churches most efficiently do the work of evangelization? Poe and his Texas brethren were yet unsettled, but they were willing to think and investigate. Lipscomb was determined to help guide them in their thinking.

Lipscomb on Cooperation

When two men work in harmony with the same set of laws, Lipscomb pointed out, they necessarily cooperate, though they may do it unconsciously or unintentionally. He reminded Poe that there was a distinction between cooperation and organization. Two farmers, living as neighbors, work side by side. One has work to do that he cannot do himself. So, he asks the aid of his neighbor. Each farmer, pursuing his own independent course, cooperates. The emergency that necessitated the call for aid ends, and the farmers are left free of any encumbering machinery.

Lipscomb conceded that some men conceived of cooperative efforts by forming organizations with a human head and human laws regulating the association. Banks, railroad companies, human governments, denominational synods, and missionary societies all belong in this category.

The congregations of the Lord, Lipscomb contended, are by nature organized cooperative bodies, ordained by God. All work which is done in these bodies is true cooperative work. Every individual in any part of the world, working in true cooperation in these bodies, is necessarily cooperating with every other.

Every organization, wrote Lipscomb, partakes of the character of its organizer. All of men's organizations naturally "float into corruption." "Hence our railroad companies, banks, political government, sectarian organizations, and all other societies of human origin necessarily are seething cauldrons that breed corruption and tend to decay. It is the essential and leading characteristic of all

human organizations We not only lack faith in human organizations to promote or preserve moral and spiritual good, but we have strong faith that they necessarily promote corruption, weakness and death."

The tendency of man has always been to improve upon the wisdom of God. There is a spirit in the church that is always crying out for the favor and popularity of the world. Men want the plaudits of the worldly wise but Lipscomb's faith made him see that God had ordained no organized cooperation save the simple congregations of the Lord. He insisted: "We sincerely and earnestly believe all organized bodies for religious purposes outside of, within, above or below the congregation of the Lord are sinful and treasonable."

But when a church finds a work to do which it cannot do alone, how shall it act then? Lipscomb answered, "Precisely as the family acts, when it finds itself unable to roll its own logs, raise its own house, harvest its own grain or pick its own cotton. Let it make known its weakness and wants to its nearest sister congregations or congregation. And let these congregations without any human organization, say whether they will aid the one asking aid or not and send the aid to sustain the teacher, or feed the poor, as congregations, without the intervention of any human organization. So soon then as the work is done each congregation is left perfectly free to pursue its own course without any entangling alliances, with burdensome and frail machinery or with its sister congregations."

The emphasis here was placed where it belonged—upon the local congregation. The emphasis, however, after the Civil War was generally upon doing things in a "big" way. The tendency of man has always been to despise the day of small things. Lipscomb magnified the local church as God's only agency to convert the world. When ten thousand local congregations, all following the same divine laws all work earnestly to save souls, each in Christian love caring for its own needy—when congregations do this, they are necessarily cooperating, for all are doing the work God intended and in the way God intended. Not being able to see any human machinery, they may be unconscious of cooperating, but churches

functioning as God ordained them to operate are necessarily and unavoidably cooperating. Combinations of churches, larger than a local congregation doing its own local work, were to be frowned upon.

Forty years after Lipscomb expressed himself in this way to John T. Poe, some churches in Tennessee had this question arise again. This case must next be noticed.

V

Early in 1910, the *Gospel Advocate* carried the announcement of an important meeting to be held at Henderson, Tennessee. This was to be a meeting of the elders and preachers of the various congregations in southwest Kentucky, eastern Arkansas, northern Mississippi, and of course, west Tennessee. They were to meet at the church at Henderson from January 25-28. The notice was signed by J. W. Dunn, G. A. Dunn, G. Dallas Smith, John R. Williams, N. B. Hardeman, L. D. Williams, W. Claude Hall, F. O. Howell, D. A. Parish, and T. B. Thompson. The article said in part: "Fully appreciating the condition of the cause of Christ in West Tennessee and adjacent territory, and knowing too, what great good can be accomplished by concerted action on the part of both preachers and churches, we desire to call a meeting of all loyal preachers and teachers of the gospel of Christ and all elders, with all who are interested in strengthening the walls of Zion and carrying the gospel to the lost, to meet at Henderson, Tennessee, on January 25-28, 1910."

Lipscomb Criticizes Henderson Meeting

David Lipscomb, now seventy-nine years old, slower by reason of age and yet still dogmatically wedded to some deep principles and convictions, cocked an eyebrow when he saw the notice. In the next issue of the *Advocate*, he wrote: "Some of the brethren last week called for a meeting of the preachers and elders in West Tennessee. We do not doubt that these brethren intend only the best for the churches, for themselves and for others. But I have been through and under these meetings so much that it surprises me to hear of such meetings I have seen much evil come out of them to the preachers and the people. I never saw any good come out of them to anyone It is scriptural to call one man in to teach

the members aright. But I never found an inspired man called in at a council of elders and preachers. Let us all individually and solidly try to stand on solid ground." This was only a gentle reminder and in itself not too significant.

The meeting was held as planned "that the brethren might get better acquainted; learn from one another more of the conditions of this great field of labor; mutually encourage and inspire one another for the work of preaching the gospel, and gain a more intimate knowledge of the Henderson school." There was preaching each night, and discussions on such subjects as, "The Work of An Evangelist," "How May Churches Cooperate In Mission Work," "What Is Liberty?", "How To Lead Churches To Be More Liberal," "The Kind of Houses and Lots To Buy" and "Shall We Advertise? But when F. L. Young of Denton, Texas, wrote Lipscomb complimenting his notice of the meeting at Henderson, Lipscomb responded:

"I have received a number of words of approval of my suggestions about unscriptural meetings. I only desire in their incipency to call attention to the danger. I had no idea that a brother who joined in the call intended any evil or wrong. But when men get away from the scripture order to engage in unscriptural meetings, they have no rule to guide them, save their own wisdom. (Jer. 20:23.) We are no wiser than others if we cut loose from God's order. I find no meeting of elders and preachers in the Bible, and I do not see what scriptural work an unscriptural meeting can do. Let us study the questions and follow the divine order."

Meanwhile the churches in Nashville were having meetings on Sunday afternoon for all Bible teachers. One week the meeting would be held at one congregation; the next week at still another; and so on. J. C. McQuiddy, F. B. Srygley, C. A. Moore would generally speak in a way "calculated to arouse interest and enthusiasm in the work." These meetings, McQuiddy explained, were simply of local congregations, and, as in any gospel meeting, people of other congregations attended. But these meetings were to involve a short but heated discussion.

Two weeks after the Henderson meeting G. Dallas Smith sent a report to the Gospel Advocate office. When McQuiddy received the report, he turned it over to F. W.

Smith, F. B. Srygley, E. A. Elam, E. G. Sefell, and David Lipscomb. According to the report, they all understood Brother Smith to be saying that the board of elders of the Henderson church had been appointed to receive the contributions of the churches, to assume the "general oversight" of an evangelist in West Tennessee. The judgment of these men, as expressed by J. C. McQuiddy, was, "As there is no scriptural authority for one church controlling and directing the funds of other churches, it appeared to those who read the article that Brother Lipscomb was probably correct when he said: 'I find no meeting of elders and preachers in the Bible, and I do not see what scriptural work an unscriptural meeting can do'." These brethren all believed that this was a step in the wrong direction. McQuiddy then returned the article to Smith, expressing to him the judgment of these other brethren, telling him that if the article were published it would cause some "adverse criticism," and asking him whether, under these circumstances, he wanted it printed.

Freed vs. McQuiddy

The ire of A. G. Freed was now aroused. Noticing the Nashville meetings and the Henderson meetings, and seeing no difference, he wrote inquiring,

"1. How is it that only good can come from one, and only evil from the other?

2. How is it that one is on 'solid ground' and the other on the sand?

3. How is it that the Nashville gathering of preachers, elders and teachers from the various churches was a 'scriptural meeting' doing 'scriptural work,' and the one at Henderson an 'unscriptural meeting' doing an 'unscriptural work'?

4. Why is it that some brethren who participated in the Nashville meeting stand ready to pass 'adverse criticism' on the meeting at Henderson?

5. Why warn the brethren against the one and not against the other?

6. Why do some brethren approve of the warning of one and wink at the other?"

To this J. C. McQuiddy replied, saying that he would rejoice to see the church at Henderson call a meeting to stir up its members to greater zeal; he would rejoice to see them support an evangelist in the field. "But, from an article that was sent to his office, and which was read by a number of able brethren, the impression was received that West Tennessee was to call the evangelist and that the contributing churches throughout West Tennessee were to send their contributions to the elders of the Henderson church to send to the evangelist, and that the church at Henderson had been asked to take the direction of the work and had consented to do so" McQuiddy insisted that the only "adverse criticism" about the Henderson church was occasioned when the brother wrote stating that the Henderson church was to direct the work and take charge of the funds raised by the cooperating churches" McQuiddy concluded.

"The scriptures establish clearly that in New Testament times the church communicated directly with the missionary in the field. (Phil. 4:15-17.) Paul knew what church sent to his necessities. This is not true when the missionary society supports the laborer. The missionary cannot see through the board and know what church is fellowshiping him. As in New Testament times churches commanded, sent, communicated directly with, and received reports of the laborers in the field, if we have proper respect for divine example, we will not turn away from the church of God to a human society to do mission work."

Controversy Concluded

Once again David Lipscomb was called into the affair. J. W. Dunn, W. S. Long, Jr., A. O. Colley, G. Dallas Smith, L. L. Brigance, A. G. Freed, G. D. Wharton, N. B. Hardeman, and W. H. Owen—all wrote to Lipscomb asking if he would kindly explain the difference between the Henderson meeting and the Nashville meeting. Lipscomb's reply stated that he had never attended any of these Nashville meetings but had inquired about them. He confessed he found nothing wrong in them "save by a failure to express themselves well." "I feared their example would lead others to engage in illegitimate

work." "In their work each congregation invites other persons interested to come and with them study the word of God and to encourage them to the more faithful discharge of the duties of all Christians must perform in the worship of the church. This is not wrong."

The report which J. C. McQuiddy had returned to G. Dallas Smith was later published in the Gospel Guide. The objectionable part of the report was as follows: "After this we again took up the 'West Tennessee Evangelist.' This was discussed by Brother A. G. Freed and others. It was finally agreed that the Henderson church should select and put in the field an evangelist to work in the destitute places in West Tennessee. This work is to begin June 1. We practically agreed to do what we can to interest the church in West Tennessee to cooperate with the Henderson church in supporting the evangelist."

After quoting the above report, Lipscomb replied: "Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of this church? The church elders at Henderson constitute a board to collect and pay out the money and control the evangelist for the brethren of West Tennessee, and all the preachers are solicitors for this work. This very same course was pursued in Texas a number of years ago. The elders of the church at Dallas were made the supervisors of the work, received the money, employed the preacher, directed and counseled him. For a number of years they employed C. M. Wilmeth. He then dropped out of the work and the Texas Missionary Society took the place. Other experiments along the same course have been made. All of them went into the society work."

"All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses is wrong. God's power is in God's churches. He is with them to bless and strengthen their work when they are faithful to him. A Christian, one or more, may visit a church with or without an invitation and seek to stir them upto a faithful discharge of their duties. But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches shall work, or to take charge of their men and money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church. Each one needs the work of distributing and using its funds as well as in giving them."

Letters continued for a short time to come from G. Dallas Smith and A. G. Freed. They insisted that they had been misunderstood; that all they intended was for other churches to have fellowship with them in supporting an evangelist, and that it was not their intention of taking charge of funds from other congregations. McQuiddy complained that it was impossible to harmonize the statements of Freed with Smith's article, at the same time, insisting: "I disapprove the meeting at Henderson because it was represented by Brother Smith as proposing to do mission work by making the elders of the one church the board to take 'the general oversight' of work in which other churches were equally interested." McQuiddy solemnly affirmed that "the work proposed is nothing less than a missionary society in embryo. The board of elders in Henderson is the board to control the funds contributed by not only the Henderson church, but by all the churches of West Tennessee. This is a combination larger than the organized church of the New Testament, which is the only organized body ordained by Jehovah for doing mission work."

McQuiddy concluded the whole discussion by saying, "As the brethren at Henderson reject our understanding of Brother Smith's language, we cheerfully accept their assurances that the church at Henderson is not to take 'the general oversight' and hope this will end the matter."

And so, end the matter it did. The affair was not heard of again.

VI

Our Problem

In five previous articles certain historical facts on the subject of congregational cooperation briefly have been set forth. The author's only desire is to challenge brethren to think. It is hoped this historical background will provide a vantage ground from which to survey the problem as it now confronts the church. The author has made every attempt to take an academic approach to the whole problem, honestly and objectively to set forth these facts as the events of the restoration movement record them. The pioneers were not impeccable; the church is under no obligation today to submit to any imperious

demands from them. It is readily recognized that these men could be wrong. They often were. But the question now confronting us is, were they wrong on the subject of congregational cooperation? If so, how far? and why? Here is the problem the brotherhood faces.

Forty-two years ago, David Lipscomb, F. B. Srygley, F. W. Smith, E. G. Sewell and E. A. Elam misunderstood the church at Henderson. They incorrectly understood that the elders of the church were receiving funds from many congregations and with these funds assuming the "general oversight" of an evangelist in West Tennessee. Neither A. G. Freed nor G. Dallas Smith defended the practice these brethren condemned, simply alleging that the Henderson church was misunderstood and was not assuming this "general oversight" or receiving these funds. Forty-two years ago this practice was branded by McQuiddy as "nothing less than a missionary society in embryo." Lipscomb said it was a "step in the wrong direction," and asked: "Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of this church?"

Today—forty two years later—one congregation assumes the responsibility of collecting a half-a-million dollars from the churches over the brotherhood and directing it into what nobody doubts is a worthwhile project of preaching the gospel. Dozens of other congregations are assuming the "general oversight" of evangelists in many fields. Forty two years ago David Lipscomb, F. B. Srygley, E. A. Elam, and J. C. McQuiddy would have said this was a "step in the wrong direction," and "the organization of a society in the elders of the church."

That some change has come over the church in its method of operating over the past forty-two years is too plain to be denied. This is neither good or bad in itself. But the very fact that the brotherhood's thinking has changed should present a challenge. On the one hand, it could mean that brethren are "stepping in the wrong direction," that brethren are drifting away from their original moorings. If brethren are going in the way of digression, it is high time they find it out and turn around before it is too late. On the other hand, brethren may be more enlightened today than forty two years ago;

—they may have more missionary zeal; they may not quibble over incidentals as much as forty years ago. Nevertheless, it should be inquired, which way are we going? Clustered around this question are implications of vast and important consequences.

Causes of the Change

It may be almost useless to inquire into the causes of this change in the brotherhood. Certainly all recognize that a new generation has been born, and that this generation is unacquainted with the problems and principles the pioneers faced. "Our schools" generally have done a pitiful job along this line. It is highly dangerous to load young preachers with dynamic missionary zeal and turn them loose on the church with almost no knowledge of basic principles. In the past forty years, brethren have faced many other issues—chief of which is premillennialism—and consequently, have neglected re-affirming these old principles involved in the whole problem of congregational cooperation. It is very difficult to meet the attack of the enemy at one point in the battle line without momentarily forgetting that other points in that line need continually to be strengthened. In short, over the last forty years very little attention has been given to the subject of congregational cooperation. The result is a new generation has arisen that has merely assumed without questioning it, that the way to do mission work was for all congregations to give through the eldership of one church. It is high time the whole question be re-thought out, and to encourage brethren to do this has been the chief purpose of these articles.

Obstacles

It may as well be admitted, however, that any re-investigation that is done will encounter some grave and serious obstacles. Foremost among these is the fact of previous commitments already made by many elders. A congregation that has committed itself to raise anywhere from twenty-five thousand to half-a-million dollars from among the churches is hardly in a position to do any honest, objective thinking on the subject. As preachers tell denominational people, they are likely to read the Bible to defend a present practice rather than objectively

seek for the truth. This is not to impugn anybody's honesty or motives. But it is folly not to face the fact of the frailty of men. It is stupid to assume that everybody in the world is basically dishonest, except our brethren. The fact is that our brethren in all honesty and sincerity could study the Bible with as much prejudice as anybody. Knowing the frailty of man, the constant tendency to defend what we practice, rather than being thoroughly objective presents something of a barrier to re-investigation of the whole problem.

The fact of prevailing inconsistencies also presents an obstacle to an objective search of the question. Let a brother today take the same position as David Lipscomb and J. M. McQuiddy, and someone is likely to re-investigate his personal practices and discover that fifteen years ago he practiced the opposite that he now teaches. This frequently does happen, and understandably so. It is entirely conceivable that a person growing up in an atmosphere where he merely assumes a certain point is true will act one way; and, when his thinking is challenged, he studies the question, changes his mind, he will act in an entirely different way. The only way that occurrences like these can be stopped is for brethren to close their minds, refuse to think, and dogmatically assert that they will never change on anything.

A third major obstacle to an objective study of the question centers itself again around the frailty of man. Few people are interested in truth for truth's sake. Allegiances to "our papers," to "big preachers," to certain schools, etc., have a tendency to color our minds. Persons with personal bias in favor of one paper, one school, or one type of big preacher will seriously investigate only one side of the question, and refuse to see both sides. Again, this is not to deny to anybody personal integrity; it is only honesty to recognize the frailties that all of us have.

In the language of David Lipscomb: "Let us study the questions and follow the divine order."

VII

Brother Brewer's Criticism

It is almost vitally important in the discussion of

any historical subject that all of the facts be accurately stated, and the conclusions logically drawn. There is the ever-present danger of reading past events in the light of present-day controversies. It is admittedly difficult when one is writing about events that occurred before his time to be sure that he understands the facts of which he is writing, and the life-setting out of which they grew. An honest student will carefully screen the information at hand, being careful to state it in its true light.

This attempt was made in a lengthy series of six articles recently printed in the *Gospel Advocate* entitled, "Congregational Cooperation—A Historical Study." In the course of the series reference was made to a meeting held in Henderson, Tennessee, in January, 1910 which resulted in the selection of a preacher to evangelize the fields of West Tennessee. The churches of that area were to send their money to the elders in Henderson who had the responsibility of directing the work of the evangelist. In the discussion David Lipscomb and J. C. McQuiddy were quoted as objecting to this method of working.

Brother G. C. Brewer in replying to a letter from Brother C. E. W. Dorris in the August 6, 1953 issue of the *Gospel Advocate* refers to the treatment of this episode saying, "Here we have a very fine illustration of people's reading things that happened before they were born and reading them in the light of circumstances in which the reader lives instead of the circumstances under which the writing was done." Brother Brewer then, thinks that these articles misrepresented the case, giving an interpretation to Brother Lipscomb which does not belong there. In fact, Brother Brewer says with strong emphasis, "I am going to tell you in emphatic terms that this point was not even in the discussion, and Brother Lipscomb's criticism was not against this method of cooperation."

The purpose of that series of articles on "Congregational Cooperation" was to give the background of the controversy to help in the current investigation. The author tried objectively to state historical facts; neither defending nor criticizing the positions taken. Brother Brewer has called in question the historical accuracy of some of these facts. It is the purpose here to see if Brother Brewer's criticism is itself accurate.

Brother Brewer has the advantage of having lived at the time and near the place of the particular meeting in question. Since this gathering occurred long before the author was born, all he knows about it is what was reported in the *Gospel Advocate*. This is a disadvantage in one sense of the term. In writing about events occurring before one is born, he is likely to miss the true issues at stake. But it should be equally evident that because an individual is alive at the time of a controversy does not mean that he himself necessarily understands the real point at issue. Although Brother Brewer was alive when the 1910 meeting at Henderson occurred, and, as he says, a student at the Nashville Bible School at the time, there is no guarantee that he fully grasped all the significant points in the controversy. Nor is there any positive proof that in forty-three years, Brother Brewer's memory may not have slipped.

The information in the series on "Congregational Cooperation" was gained from the written records in the *Advocate*. These records still say exactly what they were purported to have said in that series, Brother Brewer's memory to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Historical Facts

In reviewing the facts of this meeting, it perhaps would help clarify matters to itemize them.

1. This meeting was called. In an article signed by J. W. Dunn, G. A. Dunn, G. Dallas Smith, John R. Williams, N. B. Hardeman, L. D. Williams, W. Claude Hall, F. O. Howell, D. A. Parish, and T. B. Thompson an invitation was sent out for all "loyal preachers and teachers of the gospel of Christ and all elders, with all who are interested in strengthening the walls of Zion and carrying the gospel to the lost" to meet at the church of Christ in Henderson, Tennessee, on January 25, 1910 at ten o'clock in the morning.

2. The purpose of the call. The purpose was "to better acquaint ourselves with each other and our duty to this great field of labor." The callers made it clear that they were not coming together to have a "gay time" or "organize a missionary society." (*Gospel Advocate*, Jan. 13, 1910, p. 59.)

3. David Lipscomb objected to the meeting. After the call was printed in the *Advocate*, Lipscomb objected saying, "We do not doubt that these brethren intend only the best for the churches, for themselves and others. But I have been through and under these meetings so much that it surprises me to hear of such meetings I have seen much evil come out of them to the preachers and the people. I never saw any good come out of them."

Brother Brewer injects some personal history into the story at this point. He re-entered the Nashville Bible School in January, 1910, having preached at Lexington, Tennessee, the previous fall. He recalls a spirit of rivalry between West and Middle Tennessee in this early day, and insists he took some criticism because he was accused of "tattling" to Brother Lipscomb that the meeting was called by the National Teachers' Normal and Business College at Henderson. Brethren who called the gathering, Brother Brewer remembers, lived as much as 200 miles from each other. "This meeting," says Brother Brewer, "was not a congregation's selecting a missionary and asking other congregations to help in his support, but this was the 'meeting' that selected a missionary for West Tennessee and the missionary was J. W. Dunn."

Brother Brewer's point is that Brother Lipscomb objected only to this meeting, not to the method of congregational cooperation agreed upon. "It was not the work nor the method of doing the work," says Brother Brewer, "that Brother Lipscomb criticized." What was the point of his criticism? Brother Brewer says that it was "this selection of an evangelist and the appointment of a church by a 'meeting' that Brother Lipscomb questioned and criticized."

It should be recalled that at the meeting, the elders of the Henderson church were asked if they would assume the directing responsibilities for an evangelist in the destitute fields of West Tennessee. The elders agreed to do it, and other congregations were asked to send support to the elders of the Henderson church for this work. Now it was to the meeting, in the first place, not to the matter of other churches sending support through the elders at Henderson that displeased Brother Lipscomb. This is Brother Brewer's point.

But here is where there is wide disagreement between the written record and Brother Brewer's memory.

Oddly enough, Brother Brewer admits that the "point of the church's receiving these funds and disbursing them" was brought in, in the controversy that followed, but insists that the issue in the controversy was the meeting itself. "I know," says Brother Brewer, "very well that this was the point in the controversy, for I was in it and got some blame for the criticism that was made against it."

Now to continue with the records.

4. David Lipscomb did object to supporting an evangelist in West Tennessee by the many churches sending their funds to the elders of the church at Henderson. J. C. McQuiddy, upon receiving G. Dallas Smith's written report of the meeting at the Advocate office, said that from this letter "the impression was received that West Tennessee was to call the evangelist and that the contributing churches throughout West Tennessee were to send their contributions to the elders of the Henderson church to send to the evangelist, and that the church at Henderson had been asked to take the direction of the work and had consented to do so."

Obviously J. C. McQuiddy understood that the method of cooperation was open to serious question. But, did David Lipscomb so understand it?

Lipscomb, quoting from Smith's report in the Gospel Guide, printed the following:

After this we again took up the "West Tennessee evangelist." This was discussed by Brother A. G. Freed and others. It was finally agreed that the Henderson church should select and put in the field an evangelist to work in the destitute places in West Tennessee. This work is to begin June 1. We practically agreed to do what we can to interest the churches in West Tennessee to cooperate with the Henderson church in supporting the evangelist.

On the basis of this report, David Lipscomb replied as follows:

Now what was that but the organization of a society in the elders of this church? The church elders at Henderson constitute a board to collect

and pay out the money and control the evangelist for the brethren of West Tennessee, and all the preachers are solicitors for this work. This very same course was pursued in Texas a number of years ago. The elders of the church at Dallas were made the supervisors of the work, received the money, employed the preacher, directed and counseled him. For a number of years they employed C. M. Wilmeth. He then dropped out of the work and the Texas Missionary Society took the place. Other experiments along the same course have been made. All of them went into the society work.

All meetings of churches or officers of churches to combine more power than a single church possesses is wrong. God's power is in God's churches. He is with them to bless and strengthen their work when they are faithful to Him. A Christian, one or more, may visit a church with or without an invitation and seek to stir them up to a faithful discharge of other duties. But for one or more to direct what and how all the churches shall work, or to take charge of their men and money and use it, is to assume the authority God has given to each church. Each one needs the work of distributing and using its funds, as well as in giving them. (*Gospel Advocate*, March 24, 1910, p. 364.)

It is true, as Brother Brewer points out, that Brother Lipscomb objected to the meeting that was called. But it is equally true that Brother Lipscomb objected to this method of cooperation. This is not an attempt to defend Brother Lipscomb's position, but only to defend the historical accuracy of the report given in the series of articles on "Congregational Cooperation."

If these written records are true, then Brother Brewer either did not fully understand the issue at stake in 1910 or in the past forty-three years his memory has slipped. One thing is certain: it is impossible to harmonize Brother Brewer's present understanding of that brief controversy with the records in the *Gospel Advocate*.

